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Atari Online News, Etc.
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A-ONE #0605 01/30/04

~ Cyber Attack Warning! ~ People Are Talking! ~ Spam Turned Into Art!
~ Dutch Police Bust 52! ~ iBook Repair Program! ~ Google Gets Sued!

~ End of Spam By 2006?! ~ 'CtrlAltDelete' Author ~ GameDay Picks Cats!
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-* Labels For Pornographic Spam *-
-* Gates to Spammers: Pay Us To Read! *-
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""

I've spent the best part of my 50-plus years on this planet living in New England. Never have I experienced the stretch of cold weather that we've been having these past few weeks. You know it's cold when you consider 15-degrees as balmy! This is absolutely insane! And what is even more insane is that I wouldn't leave this area for anything.

Speaking of cold streaks, I seem to have hit a major one with regard to doing some major editorializing. Maybe that's a good thing, I don't know. There aren't really any current topics in the news that have drawn me in to go after; and those that do, I've already done to death. So, that leaves us all with a little less to read this week, but certainly also something less to think about. In the meantime, I'll sit back and relax, and plan how I'm going to celebrate watching this Sunday's Super Bowl. Go Pats!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Sorry I missed you last week. Dana will tell you that I had a 'senior moment', but I'm still not really sure of what happened. I attached last week's column to an email and sent it... somehow or another it got un-attached. Well, here's hoping that things go better this week.

There are a bunch of things that I want to talk about this time around, but I'll keep it down to two or three.

First of all, The TEAM ATARI SETI@home search group has just had its 'Bicentennial'. That's right, the members of TEAM ATARI have contributed two hundred years of CPU time in the search for a radio signal from an extraterrestrial intelligence.

If any of you guys are reading this, there are two of us from the team who are beta testing the new SETI application. It’s different. It’s a little more flexible and allows you to control the size of the data packets. It’s coming along nicely and I’d expect the switch-over to be announced before too much longer.

For any of you who are not TEAM ATARI members but are interested in the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, come and visit us at: http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/fcgi-bin/fcgi?email=joe@joemirando.ne&&cmd=user_stats_new

You don’t need a background in science, you don’t need math skills, you don’t even need to have watched CONTACT. <grin>

For information on the entire SETI@home project, check out:

http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu

The next thing I want to mention is President Bush’s new space "initiative". Last week, Mr. Bush announced his new vision of where we should be headed in space and, I admit, it’s a grand vision. A base on the moon and a manned mission to Mars. Yessir... a grand vision.

Of course, the money to pay for all of it is a little tricky. First of all, the addition to be budget will be only a fraction (and a small fraction at that) of what will be needed. To bridge the fiscal gap, money will be siphoned away from other projects.

"Okay," you’re saying, "it may be a fair trade-off". The problem is ’Part Two’.

Part Two is where the next budget-cutting so-and-so comes in and says, "Hmmm... we just can’t afford a lunar base or a mission to Mars. Chop, chop, chop".

That’s politics, that’s bean-counting, and that’s buck-passing.

Think I’m imagining it? Well NASA has just announced that it’s cutting funding for any further upgrades to the Hubble Space Telescope in order to start funding the Bush initiative.

That’s what happens when politicians and the like get involved with science. Science is about knowledge (as a matter of fact, I believe that ’science’ is taken from the latin word for knowledge). Goal-oriented initiatives almost always end up being counter-productive. The Apollo project was great in terms of national pride, but it taught us very little that we didn’t already know.

We need a clear understanding of what our goals are and what we can expect before we dedicate our money and our hopes to going to Mars. Otherwise, we’ll lose interest and it’ll take us another quarter of a century to venture away from home again.

Well, while we’re waiting for the next bean-counter to sharpen up his axe, let’s take a look at the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
==========

Richard Kilpatrick tells us about his new Falcon:

"First sold in 1993, somewhat earlier than the previous owner had suggested! Absolutely mint, not a mark anywhere on the casing, no fading or discolouring, box in reasonable condition, manuals, mouse, leads and disks all as new.

4Mb, no HD.

Now. What to do with it. How hard is it going to be, now, to find full RAM and an HD for it; do I need a fitting kit to get an HD? Can I download MultiTOS or similar, since I have an external disc enclosure which has a CD-ROM and HD inside.

It's very nice having such an unusually clean example of Atari's (almost) finest - and for once, at the same time as an ST!

Just to make life good, I also got an RME Multiface for my G5 today - so high-quality digital recording, here I come. Just as soon as I've figured out how to configure Logic."

'Tim' tells Richard:

"Open it up and see if it comes with a IDE cable. If it does just connect a laptop HD preferably under 10Gb. Grab a newer HDdriver software program and off you go.

The Falcon does not run a lot of ST games, but runs most everything else."

Richard replies:

"There's no IDE cable and no brackets. I didn't like having to open it up, but it's of more use with an internal HD, and probably could use the 14Mb RAM upgrade anyway!

So, either: Has anyone got a 2.5" IDE and brackets/cable for sale, and ideally, a RAM upgrade from the standard 4Mb.

Or: Anyone interested in a boxed, as new (sadly, now opened to check inside, but very carefully closed again) with no discolouration or wear on the keyboard/mouse/casing, totally stock 4Mb Falcon? There's really very little I can do with it without the HD/RAM and no monitor (my STE has a Mono display and runs a Mac emulator).

I've hooked up an external CD-ROM and SCSI drive enclosure and plan to do some digging on the net tonight for the utilities to format the disc (either a 2.1Gb Fireball, or a 330Mb Seagate), then I can burn some downloads onto CD using one of the Macs. IIRC the Falcon could read ISO9660 no problem, at least on my old HD/Syquest/MiNT setup.

I'm wondering if the Falcon will boot from an external SCSI drive, though. It doesn't seem to check it. "

Brian Roland adds:

"There's no IDE cable and no brackets. I didn't like having to open it up, but it's of more use with an internal HD, and probably could use the 14Mb RAM upgrade anyway!

So, either: Has anyone got a 2.5" IDE and brackets/cable for sale, and ideally, a RAM upgrade from the standard 4Mb.

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I'm wondering if the Falcon will boot from an external SCSI drive, though. It doesn't seem to check it.

Yes indeed it should be able to boot from SCSI. Only problems I ever had booting a SCSI only Falcon were with CT2B and MagiC....and there are work-arounds for that. The Falcon isn't going to scan either the IDE nor the SCSI bus without some software either run from a floppy, or initialized on a boot sector of a TOS compatible partition.

Did your Falcon not come with some system disks? It is my understanding that all Falcon's shipped with 2 or 3 system disks including things like hard disk drivers, TOS patches, print spooler, MultiTOS, some accessaries and a game or two. If you don't have these, again, contact me and I'll be happy to send archives of the stock Falcon System Disks."

Brian Roland asks about using Geneva with extended RAM:

"I like to use Geneva on my Mega 4 because it seems to work well with MROS (Steinberg) applications. I put a Marpet Xtra RAM + board in this machine, and I can't get Geneva to behave with any stability using this board. It seems to work fine under stock TOS 2.06 and with Magic 6.01.

Things I've tried... Various auto folder orders. Adjusting the RAM flags in all of Geneva's TSR and utilities.

If I put Geneva later in the auto folder, I usually get several bombs when Geneva tries to load. If I put Geneva near the top, I usually get 'recursive calls to GDOS' errors. Once or twice, it actually loaded, but Geneva doesn't see the extra RAM....some files with TT RAM flags set did load in the upper memory, but the machine wasn't stable but for a minute or two.

The Xtra RAM software I have is version 1.1 I believe.

So far, no luck with Geneva, and I wonder if anyone knows an answer."

Mark Duckworth tells Brian:

"First thing's first.. Are you 100% sure this is a fastram board? There's very very few of these and I don't think the Xtra RAM + was one of them but I could be wrong. If you're adding 4 megs of ST-ram to a 4 meg system which has a maximum addressable of 4 megs without some interesting work, then that could be the problem."

Brian replies:

"From the software end of things it is my understanding this Marpet board disguises 8meg to the OS as TT RAM. To get software to use the board's memory one is to set the TT RAM flags in a program's file header....just like one would with a TT. In other words....programs that behave on a TT using TT RAM should work with this board.

The board sits in the mega expansion bus and holds 8 one meg simm modules. The

board has what ever MMU it needs built in. Next, you put a little prg in the auto folder that tells TOS about the extra memory. It has to be TOS 2.06 btw, as earlier TOS versions can't use it.

When booting, the xtraram.prg tells TOS of the presence of extra RAM, then does a little check on hard drive software for compatibility with the new RAM."

Djordje Vukovic adds:

"I had a similar problem with Geneva vs. Alt-RAM two years ago; it was cured by appropriate settings of program header flags in all auto-folder and accessory programs, including geneva.prg itself. Maybe I was wrong, but I got an impression that some of these -had- to be set to use Alt-RAM if it was declared to TOS, otherwise they would not work well.

Perhaps you should try booting with the barest possible setup (the minimum needed to boot Geneva), and then try adding other possibly offending programs. The Alt-RAM board is not currently in my Mega, so I can not check if this is the only good setting, but flags for geneva.prg and jarxxx.prg are currently set here for fast load, use alt-ram, but not malloc in alt-ram. For taskman.acc all three flags are set. For other important programs such as nvdi.prg or xcontrol.acc all flags are set as well.

It must also set a "Fast RAM buffer" and its cookie, if it doesn't, you will have a lot of problems (i.e. you won't be able to work at all); check whether you get a _FRB cookie after running xtraram.prg (btw. Magic sets this buffer and cookie by itself).

Are you sure that the power supply of your Mega can handle this? Eight 1MB modules (probably with 8 or nine chips each) are quite power hungry; When I put an Alt-RAM board with 8 such modules in My MegaST4, the power supply was operating uncomfortably near its nominal limits (i.e. like 100-200mA below nominal load, with the floppy drive running). To be safe I had to put a more powerful supply in (a 4-amperes one; I believe it was from some Falcon - or maybe a Megafile?). Also, with such a large

additional load, the initial voltage regulation setting may not be appropriate anymore; check with a voltmeter whether you have 5V – (say) 0.1V on the motherboard and on the RAM board. If there is a possibility of overload, try operating the board with less memory (e.g. 4MB), if such a configuration is possible. Finally, you may check whether all of that RAM is really working properly, with some utility that can check it. There is also a possibility of overheating in the cramped Mega box."

Brian replies:

"I finally found a way to get Geneva to run with this Xtra Memory.
1. Disable extra.prg in the auto folder all together.
2. Run the Xtra.prg from the desk top once it's booted.

NeoDesk still never sees 'alternate RAM', but programs with proper flags find their proper memory and so far, seem to function as they should.

So far, where Geneva is concerned....it's just not happy if Xtra.prg runs from anywhere in the auto folder. The drawback is that things like NVDI, STing, etc....are going to ST RAM....and those are the sorts of things that are really nice to have out of the way in alternate RAM so there's lots of room for those 'legacy apps' that break in anything other than ST RAM.

>> Are you sure that the power supply of your Mega can handle this?

I'm glad you brought this up....
I currently only have 4meg installed in the Xtra RAM board.
I don't have any internal disk drive other than the stock 720k Atari/Epson Floppy.
The Link 97 gets power from the SCSI bus....

All the memory tests report well functioning RAM, both ST and Alternate.

I have noticed however, since installing the new TOS 2.6 board, and the Xtra-RAM board, the screen sometimes 'blinks' really fast at random and unpredictable moments. I don't think it's an AC power surge since I don't notice other computers and machines on the same circuit blinking along with it.

Could a weak power supply also cause deviant MIDI transmissions? As this Mega ages...I find more MIDI errors. In fact, it's gotten REALLY bad lately....esp with things like SDS sample dumps and system exclusive data that all worked fine in past years/sessions. I know the MIDI cables are proper and aren't dodgy...have tested them extensively....and they are good SHORT cables with truly independent 5 wire leads (not audio DIN cables where some pins share a wire or are shorted).

It's mind boggling, because every software based system test I can get my hands on reports a healthy machine, yet I get serious problems with MIDI that only get worse each time I power up the Mega.

Oops, I forgot to clarify something....
The instructions say TOS 2.06 must be present ;however, MagiC 6.01 identifies itself as TOS 2.00. The board works very well here with MagiC so far. I even have NVDI 5.03 loading in the Extra RAM for a MagiC setup."

Mark Bedingfield asks about Internet/LAN connections with his new TT:

"I am about to get a TT this weekend, I am building an ethernet interface, as the acsi port will be free. Anyway, I have a LAN setup at home and want to use the TT for all things internet. What is the best clients ATM. Stik2, Sting, etc? Also browsers, and mail clients. What seems to be the best? Highwire looks pretty interesting."

Kenneth Medin tells Mark:

"MagicNet and MintNet both need multitasking and will not run under plain TOS. STinG runs well with all.

STinG is said to be slower than the others but it’s fast enough for me. Everything (except ROUTE.TAB routing table) can be configured using cpx modules and you don’t have to reboot for changes to take effect.

STinG handles multiple networks in subnets fine. Good if you want to experiment with MIDI or null modem SLIP connections from your TT to other ST’s etc. I have up to 8 Ataris online here on various subnets, al running STinG.

Does STiK have Ethernet support at all? Guess it’s intended for a simple dial-up connection only.

MagicNet and MintNet can use most STinG clients but not the opposite.

Clients I’m using:

Newswatch for news and Popwatch for mail. Both need a separate reader. I use Okami which overall _is_ the best. Can be hard to setup mainly because the doc’s are not updated. Not for the average OE (like you?) user... Does not look so nice but have lots of features and is very stable as long as you stay out of known bugs. I prefer Okami to both OE6 and Mozilla 1.5.

Mymail is a very good mail reader/client and if/when it will support news I might think of switching from Okami. And it Swedish made and therefore of good quality

Newsie for less "advanced" mail and news. Lacks support for international characters like ääöü. Can be used alone or with Newswatch/Popwatch for the online part.

Aicq is a good ICQ client.

FTPSERV ftp server.

Aftp nice ftp client but a bit buggy sometimes under STinG.

Telstar telnet client.

Weblight webserver. with some Perl support.

Bnet networks drives. Sort of usable but tend to fail if you copy directories over the network here. Might be my setup, though??

MEG spam filter with static filters but very usable. Hangs sometimes on strangely formatted spam mail. I get 125 spams per day with lots of SWEN

virus and appr. 10% slips through the MEG filters and _no_ real mails have been filtered by mistake. Compare that to the Mozilla filters that miss about 5% of spam but also tend to block real mail as well.

CAB 2.8 is still the only usable browser. I use it a lot actually but MSIE and Mozilla are off course much better.

Highwire is _very_ promising but the fact you can't yet fill in forms makes it useless IMHO. You can't do a simple Google search...

I also use a time client to set the TT clock.

TUR.APP to check open connections in the IP stack.

Resolve, Ping and Traceroute is built into the STinG dialer. Note that for some reason is STinG traceroute useless behind NAT but simple Ping works!"

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - 'Manhunt' Redefines Game Violence
Violent Games Battle! Halo 2 News!
GameDay Picks Panthers!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

Carolina Edges New England in Key Video Game Bowl

Fans always want to root for the underdog in major sporting events - and a video game contest with a perfect track record of picking the eventual Super Bowl champion likes the Carolina Panthers in an upset this Sunday.

Days before the real football championship is contested, Carolina Panthers wide receiver Steve Smith has beaten the New England Patriots' wide-out Troy Brown 29-21 in a head-to-head video game matchup.

The two played Wednesday night in Houston at the Sony Corp.-sponsored ninth annual "989 Sports Game Before the Game," playing Sony's "NFL GameDay 2004"

on its PlayStation 2 console. The game involves each player controlling a team.

In the first eight years of the event, the winner of the electronic showdown went on to hoist the Vince Lombardi Trophy as the Super Bowl champion.

The real game, Super Bowl XXXVIII, will be played this Sunday in Houston. Oddsmakers have set New England as a seven-point favorite.

Microsoft Confirms ’Halo 2’ Release in Fall

"Halo 2," the sequel to the best-selling Xbox game ever and one of the most-anticipated titles of 2004, will ship this fall, Microsoft Corp. said on Friday, dashing hopes that the game would be out sooner.

Many industry observers as well as fans had expected "Halo 2" to ship as early as the spring - possibly in March or April - and retailers had been counting on a June release date.

But a spokeswoman confirmed on Friday that the "Halo 2" launch is now set for the later part of the year. A firm launch date was not available, although it would be in Microsoft’s next fiscal year, which starts in July, the spokeswoman said.

As of Friday morning, the Web sites of specialty game retailers GameStop Corp. and Electronics Boutique Holdings Corp. still listed "Halo 2" as being scheduled for a June 1 release.

Bungie, the Microsoft-owned developers of the original "Halo," which has sold more than 4 million units since its November 2001 release, posted a note about the timing of "Halo 2" on its Web site on Friday.

"So, remember last year when we told you we don’t announce release dates until we’re confident well meet our deadline? Well now were confident. Halo 2 will ship in fall 2004. Please make a note of it," the site said.

’Manhunt’ Redefines Game Violence

The creators of "Manhunt" have succeeded in making a game that’s often gruesome, disgusting and shocking, plus numbingly repetitive and murderously difficult.

The story, such as it is, begins with the staged execution of convicted killer James Earl Cash. He’s been strapped to the gurney but unknowingly injected with sedatives instead of lethal drugs.

He awakens in the dank confines of the death chamber and discovers he’s become the star of a series of snuff films. Cash is ordered around by smarmy Valiant Video Enterprises director Lionel Starkweather (superbly voiced by actor Brian Cox, the original Hannibal Lecter in the 1986 film "Manhunter").

As Cash, you’ll stroll the trash-lined streets of Carcer City, a

nondescript Midwestern rust belt town, picking off various thugs and gang members in a variety of brutal ways through 20 levels.

Delivering the nastiest killings for Starkweather’s videos is key - the manner in which you dole out death is rated on a five-star scale. I got plenty of one and two-star ratings by sneaking up behind thugs and stabbing them in the neck. Higher ratings are awarded depending on how much additional carnage you can add to the execution.

Follow Starkweather’s direction, and he’ll chime in with satisfaction: "The bodies are starting to stack up nicely," he says. "We’re getting some great footage here."

Lethal instruments include plastic bags for suffocating, as well glass shards and metal wire. Later, you’ll obtain sickles, chain saws and an array of guns, some loaded with hollow-point bullets.

One nagging inconsistency is "Manhunt’s" use of stealth: You must lure your victims into shadows where they can’t see you, then sneak up from behind for the kill. The problem is that it’s often impossible to sneak up. At one point I was jumped by a goon despite creeping along a wall and ducking into shadows whenever possible.

Forget about clashing with the deranged members of the "Skinz," "Innocentz" and "Smiley" clans head-on. With a few exceptions, out-and-out fighting attracts too many other enemies who’ll quickly gang up and pummel you.

With the stealth aspect often lacking, "Manhunt" quickly degenerates into a repetitious series of ghastly murders. And really, how many times do you want to see some guy’s skull get smashed to a bloody pulp?

The stylized, grainy graphics of the PlayStation 2 version I played (Xbox and PC versions are promised soon) were perfectly suited for the snuff film theme of the game.

"Manhunt" certainly isn’t the first to raise (or lower, depending on your point of view) the bar on digital violence. Remember "Mortal Kombat?" One of that game’s fighting moves involved ripping out your opponent’s spinal cord. More recently, "Postal" had you running around killing innocent bystanders with all manner of weaponry.

"Manhunt" has high production values and will give even the best gamers a challenge. But the carnage comes off as more of a grisly gimmick to sell more video games - not a compelling part of a story.

"Manhunt" is rated M by the Entertainment Software Rating Board for ages 17 and older. I shudder to think of what else this game would have to show to get the board’s most stringent Adults Only rating. Two stars out of four.

Video Game Outlook Hinges on Price Cuts, Analysts Say

Unless video game hardware makers cut prices deeply in 2004 to stoke demand, analysts said on Wednesday, growth-hungry investors who have watched the sector boom in recent years could be in for a rough ride.

Game publishers and retailers are already banking on a console price cut

of around 30 percent in order to draw a mass-market audience at a time when sales are slowing for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox.

If recent history is any guide, though, they may not get the depth of cut from Sony Corp. and Microsoft Corp. they are expecting - setting them up for another down year of lowered forecasts and disappointing sales, analysts said.

Electronic Arts Inc., the industry's largest publisher, said on Wednesday it expects the prices of Sony's PS2 and Microsoft's Xbox to come down to $129 from $179 sometime between the spring and Labor Day.

"While it's not our call to make, we think the opportunity for the $149 price point has come and gone," Chief Financial Officer Warren Jenson said on a conference call.

The company forecast U.S. sales of 7 million to 8 million units for the PS2 and 2.5 million to 3 million units for the Xbox, both roughly flat to down from 2003.

The desires of the industry leader notwithstanding, though, expectations are growing that the next generation of hardware may not come until 2006, and that may lengthen the timetable for price cuts, analysts said.

"With EA expressing (a) PS2/Xbox price cut expectation to $129 by year-end 2004, we see no prospect for 'upside surprise' to $99 but disappointment potential if the cut is to $149 at E3 ... which, if Sony is managing for a holiday 2006 PS3 launch, seems to us to be a plausible scenario," RBC Capital Markets analyst Stewart Halpern said in a note.

After Sony and Microsoft made cuts to $199 from $299 in May 2002, hardware and software sales soared. The move proved so beneficial for the industry that, entering 2003, most were hoping that another round of cuts, to $149, was coming.

But at the E3 industry trade show last May, Sony shocked everyone by moving to $179, which Microsoft matched a day later. Disappointment came quickly, and some held out hope that a second cut to $149 might still emerge by September.

It did not, though, and industry growth last year fell short of expectations as a result. Overall industry sales dropped nearly 3 percent in 2003 to $10 billion as hardware unit sales declined.

Though a move to $149 can not be ruled out, other analysts say, it would be in no one's best interests.

"You'll see Microsoft continue to have decelerating hardware sales, as will Sony (at $149)," said P.J. McNealy, an analyst with American Technology Research. "That would not only not sit will with consumers who are looking for the $99 magic price point but also with retailers and publishers."

McNealy said he believed Microsoft may be considering a move to $99 for the Xbox by the end of the year, as a way to keep momentum in the face of competition from two new handheld platforms, Sony's PSP and Nintendo Co. Ltd.'s DS.

"We think that they're strongly considering it," he said, adding that Sony might have to respond in kind. "I think it certainly puts the pressure on them. $149 will likely not get it done."

Others have expressed the same sentiment, including U.S. Bancorp Piper Jaffray analyst Tony Gikas, who said in a note on Wednesday it would take a move to $129 on PS2 and Xbox for 2004 hardware unit sales to equal those of 2003.

Battle Over Violent Video Games Heating Up

The fight over children's use of violent video games is escalating as parents, retailers, legal scholars and elected officials debate proposals to restrict minors' access to the most violent games.

Disputes in Florida, California, Washington state and Congress pit parents and lawmakers who say the games may prompt some teens to commit violence against merchants and civil libertarians who say no link exists and that such entertainment is a constitutionally protected form of free speech.

Both sides are watching a case in Washington state that some legal analysts predict will be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. The state passed a law last year restricting the sale to minors of some violent games. Video game manufacturers argued that the law violated the First Amendment's free speech protection. A federal judge barred enforcement of the law until a hearing in June. Both sides have said they will appeal if they lose.

"Fresh ground in law will be made, one way or the other," says William Mayton, law professor at Emory University in Atlanta.

In the meantime, some elected officials are proposing laws that would keep the most violent games from children:

The City Council in North Miami, Fla., on Tuesday approved an ordinance requiring retailers to get written parental approval before selling or renting such games to anyone younger than 17. But the council delayed enforcement until key court cases are decided. Under the measure, retailers would be warned, then fined up to $500 a day for repeated violations.

California Assemblyman Leland Yee, who holds a doctorate in child psychology, introduced a bill this month that would limit sales of the most violent video games by adding them to existing laws regulating the distribution of "harmful matter" to minors. A second bill would require that such games be displayed separately from other games and on higher shelves so children can't see them. "We have tailored this bill narrowly enough to withstand constitutional muster," Yee says.

U.S. Rep. Joe Baca (D-Calif.) said he is gathering support for his bill limiting minors' access to the most violent video games. A previous version of Baca's bill died in committee in 2002. His current legislation is awaiting a hearing by the House Judiciary Committee.

Most efforts to limit access to games have failed. But the games become more realistic with each generation of animation technology. The most violent games, in which players gun down human targets, are gory.

As video games have supplanted simpler diversions as a preferred escape of America's youth, the industry has prospered. It achieved $6.9 billion in sales in 2002. An estimated 145 million Americans play video games, and adults buy nine out of every 10 games sold, according to industry

statistics.

Those who favor laws restricting the sale or rental of violent videos to minors say government should treat the games like alcohol or tobacco. They say that retailers don’t always enforce a voluntary rating system and that parents don’t know how violent some videos are. They say growing scientific evidence links playing violent video games to violent behavior.

Opponents of such bans say the industry polices itself and that most videos are purchased by parents or with their consent. And they question the validity of studies suggesting a link between playing violent video games and violence.

"We don’t ever get complaints from parents that the rating system is broken," says Bo Andersen, president of the Video Software Dealers Association. "What you have is government trying to step in and take control of what is a parental responsibility."

Questions about whether watching violent entertainment sparks violent acts are nothing new. In 1977, a Florida teen’s lawyer argued that "television intoxication" caused his client to murder an elderly neighbor when he was 15. The jury rejected that argument and convicted Ronny Zamora, who will be freed from prison in June after serving almost 27 years.

Proponents of government restrictions argue that the interactive nature of violent video games, in which players kill human targets over and over again, take them beyond the realm of movies and television. Courts so far have rejected that argument.

Part of the dispute in North Miami centers on Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, a game that contains the phrase "kill the Haitians." South Florida has thousands of Haitian immigrants. Haitians in New York and Boston also have protested the game, in which players kill Haitians and Cubans.

Take-Two Interactive Software and Rockstar Games of New York, the game’s manufacturers, have apologized and promised to delete such language from future editions.

A federal appeals court in June overturned a St. Louis County, Mo., law restricting minors’ access to some video games. The court reversed a district court’s conclusion that video games are not protected speech. The court found that St. Louis County’s contention that the games can damage some players’ psychological health was "unsupported in the record." Another appeals court struck down a similar law in Indianapolis in 2001.

Washington state Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson, who sponsored the bill in her state, said her legislation isn’t censorship. "There is a great deal of precedent for restricting dangerous things like alcohol and tobacco to minors," she says.

The difference, Mayton says, is that any effects of video games are mental, and the First Amendment protects against thought-control by the government.

"Having said that, the First Amendment’s not an absolute," he says. "If you can show that the games do cause people to go out there and hurt others, you’ve got a case for an exception. Perhaps."

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

MyDoom Worm Spreads Rapidly, Targets SCO Web Site

MyDoom, the latest worm to infect computers over the Internet, was designed to attack the Web site of the SCO Group Inc., the small software maker suing IBM over the use of code for the Linux operating system, experts said on Tuesday.

In response, SCO, which has drawn the ire of many Linux advocates for its claims that Linux software includes copyrighted code from the Unix operating system, offered a $250,000 reward for "information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for this crime."

Since appearing late Monday afternoon, the worm has spread rapidly, mostly in North America, accounting for one in nine messages globally, experts said. The volume of messages clogged networks and appeared to be concentrated in corporate environments.

The new worm, also known as Novarg or Shimgapi, is activated when unsuspecting recipients of an e-mail message open a file attachment that releases a virus.

An infected personal computer could then allow attackers to gain unauthorized access and use the computer to aid in an Internet attack to bring down SCO’s Web site, said Oliver Friedrichs, senior manager at security company Symantec Corp.

"Certainly there’s code in here to launch a denial-of-service attack against SCO on Feb. 1," Friedrichs told reporters on a conference call.

SCO, based in Lindon, Utah, has already been targeted repeatedly with numerous denial-of-service attacks, which are used to flood a Web site with requests for information so that it overloads and shuts down.

"This one (MyDoom) is different and much more troubling, since it harms not just our company, but also damages the systems and productivity of a large number of other companies and organizations around the world," Darl McBride, SCO’s chief executive, said in a statement. "We do not know the origins or reasons for this attack, although we have our suspicions. This is criminal activity and it must be stopped."

SCO claimed in lawsuit filed last March that International Business Machines Corp.’s customers and others are illegally using a version of the Linux operating system, a free operating system that software developers can modify.

The attacks from infected computers are scheduled to begin on Feb. 1 and continue to Feb. 12, Symantec said.

At risk are computers running the latest versions of Microsoft Corp.’s Windows programs and any e-mail program.

The worm doesn’t exploit any flaws in Windows, but rather is designed to entice the recipient of an e-mail to open an attached file and run programs contained in the attachment.

The mass-mailing worm that arrives as an attachment with an .exe, .scr, .zip or .pif extension and can have a subject line of "test" or "status."

Users who receive the worm and simply ignore or delete it will be able to avoid any damage.

MyDoom also mails itself out to addresses in the victim’s computer and is clogging mail servers and degrading network performance at companies, experts said.

The worm appears to have a random sender’s address and subject line and sometimes contains an error message such as "The message cannot be represented in 7-bit ASCII and has been sent as a binary attachment."

Microsoft also offered two $250,000 bounties last November for information leading to the capture of those responsible for the Blaster worm and SoBig virus.

MyDoom Variant Emerges, Targets Microsoft

A variant of the MyDoom worm has emerged as the most devastating virus since last summer, and is likely to target Microsoft Corp.’s Web site, security experts said on Wednesday.

Since appearing earlier this week, the worm, also dubbed Novarg or Shimgapi, has infected computers across the globe by enticing users to open a file attachment that releases a program that potentially allows other attackers to gain unauthorized access.

The financial damage from the virus-like program - from network slowdown to lost productivity - is already being measured in the billions of dollars, according to anti-virus vendors.

The latest version of the worm is designed to flood Microsoft’s Web site with requests for information in an attempt to bring it down, experts said on Tuesday. This strategy is similar to that of the first version, which targeted the Web site of the SCO Group Inc., the small software maker suing International Business Machines Corp. over the use of code for the Linux operating system, they noted.

"It’s interesting in that it potentially has a denial of service attack on Microsoft," said Jimmy Kuo, a researcher at Network Associates Inc.’s McAfee anti-virus unit.

Kuo said that it was difficult to tell whether the variant, called "MyDoom.b," was spreading across the Internet, or "in the wild." So far, anti-virus companies have received and analyzed the variant from only a few sources.

The MyDoom variant appeared to have other similar aspects to the first version, in that it exempts e-mail address for government agencies, some universities, and other computer security companies, including Symantec

Corp.

Computers running any of the latest versions of Microsoft's Windows operating system e-mail program are at risk of being infected, although the worm doesn't exploit any flaws in Windows or software.

Instead, MyDoom is designed to entice the recipient of an e-mail to open an attachment with an .exe, .scr, .zip or .pif extension.

Since the worms often appear as error messages from "Mail Administrators" and other official-looking addresses, many inevitably open an attachment after finding minimal information in the message. Users who receive the worm and simply ignore or delete it will be able to avoid any damage.

In response to the worm's targeting its Web site, SCO offered a $250,000 reward for "information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for this crime." SCO has drawn the ire of many Linux advocates for its claims that Linux software includes copyrighted code from the Unix operating system.

The attacks from infected computers on SCO and Microsoft are scheduled to begin on Feb. 1 and continue to Feb. 12.

U.S. Rolls Out Cyberattack Warning System

The U.S. government on Wednesday rolled out a "cyber alert" system to warn computer users about viruses, worms and other online threats, two days after the "MyDoom" worm snarled e-mail traffic worldwide.

Internet users who sign up will receive e-mail warnings about new worms like "MyDoom," as well as general tips about how to make their computers more secure, officials with the Homeland Security Department said.

Officials said they hope to slow the spread of cyber attacks by making the online public more aware of the specific weaknesses they exploit.

"The intent is for this information to be made available to the public to receive the widest and most appropriate distribution," said Amit Yoran, director of Homeland Security's cyber security division.

Online attacks like SoBig and Slammer have shut down automatic teller machines, interfered with emergency-dispatch systems and knocked nearly the entire country of South Korea offline. Security experts say future attacks could disable power plants, hospitals or other "critical infrastructure."

Experts say MyDoom accounted for 1 in 9 e-mail messages over the past few days.

Homeland Security's warning system is intended to augment alerts from private security companies like Symantec Corp., Yoran said. Unlike the department's terrorism warning system, it will not offer color-coded threat levels.

Computer users can sign up for the alert system at (http://www.us-cert.gov), Yoran said. Warnings will be sent by e-mail and also posted on the Web site, he said.

E-mail warnings will contain an electronic signature to verify their authenticity, he said.

One senator said the system would actually make cyberattacks more damaging.

"If I were a betting man, I'd put a few dollars down that the next virus that clogs computer networks is going to be transmitted through an e-mail that looks like one of these DHS e-mail alerts," Sen. Charles Schumer said in a statement.

The agency could better contain cyberattacks by working with Internet providers to locate infected computers and take them offline, the New York Democrat added.

Experts See End to Computer 'Spam' by 2006

Internet users beware - within a couple of years you may have fewer opportunities to reduce your debt or increase your penis size.

Unwanted "spam" offers currently account for more than half of all e-mail traffic, but at least two high-tech executives say the torrent of pornography and unbelievably low mortgage rates could slow to a trickle by 2006.

Microsoft Corp . founder Bill Gates predicted the demise of unsolicited commercial e-mail at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Friday, according to a company spokesman.

His prediction was backed up on Monday by the head of a prominent anti-spam company.

"I believe we'll solve spam by the end of 2005," said Enrique Salem, president and chief executive of privately held Brightmail Inc., which scrubs spam for large Internet service providers like Verizon Communications and BellSouth Corp..

That may seem like wishful thinking to Internet users who have seen no drop in herbal Viagra offers since a new federal anti-spam law went into effect on January 1.

Salem said Brightmail numbers show that the proportion of spam has increased to around 60 percent of all e-mail, from 58 percent in December.

That figure should peak around 65 percent later this year and than start to decline as improved filtering techniques take hold and federal agents begin enforcing the new law, he said.

Brightmail rolled out a "reputation service" on Monday to profile e-mail sources and pinpoint those who send out spam. Mail from "clean" sources like friends and reputable businesses will pass unencumbered, while other addresses that have generated a large number of complaints will be blocked.

Combined with identity-verification services being developed by Time Warner Inc's America Online and other large Internet providers, the reputation service should block enough spam to make the business unprofitable, Salem said.

At Davos, Gates outlined several other techniques to discourage spam, a company spokesman said. Spammers could be slowed down through "computational puzzles" that suck up computer processing power or require a human to solve them. Another approach could require senders of unsolicited e-mail to pay a fee unless it is waived by the receiver.

"We as a company believe that by a couple of years from now spam will be down to a very manageable trickle ... it will be almost an afterthought," Microsoft spokesman Sean Sundwall said.

America Online introduced a new security feature last week that would make it harder for spammers to hijack an AOL address.

A company spokesman said fighting spam was a priority at the No. 1 Internet provider, but he declined to predict when it would end.

"It’s very popular right now, in fact I’d say it’s in vogue to say you have the largest, greatest cure-all to solve spam forever," said AOL spokesman Nicholas Graham. "But these are the same people who think we’ll end up living in a world with no taxes and a cure for the common cold."

Dutch Police Arrest 52 in E-Mail Scam

Dutch police have arrested 52 people suspected of defrauding gullible Internet users in one of the largest busts of the infamous "Nigerian e-mail" scam.

Also known as an "advance fee" or "419" scheme, the scammers sent spam e-mails asking for help in transferring a large sum of money out of a politically or economically troubled country, in exchange for a generous percentage.

Robert Meulenbroek, spokesman for the Amsterdam prosecutor’s office, said the ring broken this week had reaped millions of euros (dollars). Recent victims included people from the United States, Japan, England, Russia, Sweden and Switzerland.

A task force of 80 officers raided 23 apartments, seizing computers, fake passports and euro50,000 ($62,000) in cash. One suspect was injured attempting to escape by leaping from a third-floor apartment, he said.

The detainees were not identified under Dutch privacy rules, but most were believed to be Nigerian, police said.

In a variation on one of the world’s oldest scams, the Nigerian e-mail con presents himself as a well-connected person who needs access to a Western bank account to transfer a large sum of money that cannot be spent in his own country.

He promises a cut of the money in exchange for a smaller upfront cost before the larger sum can be transferred but it never is.

The scam has existed for years in various forms, but in the 1990s it moved online, where it is cheaper to organize and harder to trace.

Arrests have been made in several countries in recent years, including

Australia, Canada, and the United States.

The Amsterdam scammers referred their potential victims to Web sites of fictitious companies with names like Global Securities and Financial Company Limited, or Fortune Trust Finance & Securities.

Often, they listed a fake address, though most had a working mobile phone number.

The suspects worked from their homes and sent more than 1 million e-mails, at times clogging the servers of their Internet provider, Dutch-based cable company UPC. Police enlisted UPC's help to trace them, Meulenbroek said.

Six people, three from Nigeria and three from Benin, were convicted in a similar case in Amsterdam in May, receiving sentences of up to 4 1/2 years. They had defrauded victims for several million dollars (euros), including a Swiss professor who lost US$482,000 after being promised 25 percent of a US$36 million sum.

Nigeria has recently stepped up its efforts to eradicate the scam, which taints its image abroad. The Central Bank of Nigeria denies any connection to the scammers, and Nigerian agencies have been placing warning advertisements in international newspapers for years.

The scam is sometimes called a "419" fraud due to the Nigerian criminal code outlawing it.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland earlier this month, Nigeria's finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, reissued a statement promising to crack down on the scammers.

FTC Announces Labels for Pornographic 'Spam'

Pornographic "spam" e-mail will have to be clearly labeled by mid-June to allow Internet users to easily filter it out, the Federal Trade Commission announced on Wednesday.

Unsolicited pornography will have to bear a label reading "SEXUALLY-EXPLICIT-CONTENT:" in the subject line and the messages themselves will not be allowed to contain graphic material, the FTC said.

Outrage over unsolicited pornography and other forms of unsolicited e-mail spurred Congress to pass the first nationwide anti-spam law last year, which required the FTC to develop labels for smut.

An FTC study released last spring found that 17 percent of pornographic offers contained images of nudity that appeared whether a recipient wanted to see them or not.

The new rule is intended to change that. Pornographers will not be allowed to include sexually explicit pictures in the body of the message, though they will be allowed to include hyperlinks or other methods to access their material.

Like other e-mail marketers, they will also be required to include their postal address and an easy way to opt out of future mailings.

Several states have already passed laws requiring pornographic spam to bear an "ADV:ADULT" label or some variant, but they will be overridden by the federal standard.

The FTC determined the "adult" tag was too vague as it could apply to gambling or tobacco, an official said.

"Lots of things are appropriate for adults that aren't appropriate for children," said FTC Assistant Director Allen Hile.

The hyphenated "SEXUALLY-EXPLICIT-CONTENT:" label, while ungrammatical, will make it easier to block explicit content while letting through messages from anti-pornography groups or others who may use the phrase, the FTC said in its notice.

The public will have three weeks to comment on the proposal, which is due to take effect in mid-June.

Hile said the agency is especially interested to hear whether the measure will encounter any technical hurdles. Free-speech arguments will carry less weight as the agency has been directed by Congress to develop the labels, he said.

"We don't have a whole lot of discretion in this," Hile said. "I guess we can't prevent commenters from saying, 'What a stupid idea,' or 'It violates the Constitution' or whatever, but we can't do anything with that."

Gates Wants to Give E-Mail Users Anti-Spam Weapons

Making spammers pay has long been a dream of e-mail users. Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates says his company wants to make it a reality.

Speaking late last week at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Gates said his company is studying ways to allow e-mail users to charge senders a fee before accepting their messages.

Gates also predicted that spam could be eradicated in two years, an assertion that surprised many technology security experts, who are seeing spam escalate to new heights despite a new federal law designed to crack down on the practice.

In his vision put forth in Switzerland, Gates said computer users could set different monetary thresholds for different senders. But such a system is complex, and a Microsoft spokesman said that it is "the least fleshed out" of several initiatives the company is examining.

Microsoft also is studying "challenge-response" technology, in which senders get an automatic response from recipients asking for verification that the sender is a real person. This would cut down on spam, which generally is sent in bulk by computers.

Challenge-response systems already are used by some e-mail account providers, including Earthlink Inc. and Mailblocks Inc. But with more than 100 million users of Microsoft's Hotmail and MSN mail services, Gates's company has the ability to alter the e-mail landscape with its initiatives.

E-mail security experts remained skeptical, however, especially about the

payment scheme.

"Any solution to spam that results in reduced usability for legitimate e-mailers is a step backwards," said Ray Everett-Church, chief privacy officer of ePrivacygroup.com and counsel to the Committee Against Unsolicited Commercial Email.

Everett-Church said that spammers would likely be able to defeat the system by disguising their identities, much as they are successfully doing now.

Moreover, he said, the system would require new hardware and software costs that would have to be borne by Internet service providers that would likely operate the payment system for users.

Other anti-spam activists fear that those costs would be passed on to consumers, and that large Internet providers would become tollbooths for e-mail.

An Australian company, CashRamSpam.com, already has implemented a payment system. It advertises that users can either use it to block all unwanted e-mail by setting a high fee, or set a lower fee and make money from some marketers who might be willing to pay to have their messages read.

The company takes 10 percent of whatever the recipients might get. However, recipients to e-mailers who use this service have to sign up as well.

In the meantime, spam-control companies say that volume continues to increase even since a new federal law took effect Jan. 1.

"Clearly the content hasn’t changed at all," said Susan Getgood, senior vice president of U.S. marketing at SurfControl LLC. "In some cases it might be even more confusing than before the law was passed. Spammers didn’t waste a minute to make it look like they were complying."

The law seeks to curb deceptive practices used by the most notorious peddlers of diet fads, body enhancements and get-rich-quick schemes.

Getgood said her company is seeing spam that is trying to exploit loopholes or gray areas in the law. In one case, an e-mail claimed it was offering lists of strange state laws.

"It is illegal to put tomatoes in clam chowder," the e-mail read.

This would allow the sender to get around the new law’s exemption for unsolicited e-mail whose primary purpose is not commercial.

But the e-mail went on to say:

"The primary purpose of this email is to deliver you a ’Crazy USA State Law of the Week’ - The secondary purpose of this email is to let you know:

"Click Here to Email Advertise Your Web Site to 1,850,000 0PT-IN Email Addresses for FREE!’’

Artists Turn Junk E-Mail Into Spam Show

Instead of just cursing the steady assault of junk e-mail in their inboxes,

some artists have put spam on parade. They've even found poetry in it. "Reimagining the Ordovician Gothic: Fossils from the Golden Age of Spam" considers how future historians might see us if the only window into our culture they had was a vast collection of e-mail effluent.

There are backlit flow charts, dioramas, a pile of pornography.

A classification scheme, true to the paleontological theme, divides spam into such categories as Real Estate, Urgent Messages, Work at Home, Goods and Personal Appearance.

The three 25-year-old artists scrawled excerpts from e-mails graffiti-style over an entire stairwell and filled suitcases with the goods advertised in spam to represent the medium's empty promises. Diet pills and house blueprints both feature prominently.

"Spam is something an enormous number of people end up having in common," said Daniel Greenfeld, who created the show along with fellow artists Mike Rosenthal and Jesse Jarnow. "My father understands very little about computers, but he understands what it is to get spam. He understands what it is to be annoyed by this onslaught."

About half of all e-mail traffic is spam, according to companies that filter out the unwanted messages. About 58 percent of the 80 billion messages analyzed by Brightmail Inc. in December were spam. The onslaught has led the White House to revamp its e-mail system and Congress to pass an anti-spam law, which took effect Jan. 1 and is widely maligned as ineffective.

In the exhibit, scientific-looking flow charts show how spammers employ various "cloaking schemes" including personalization, narrative and robotic humanity.

But just as today's paleontologists are likely to err when trying to recreate the real Ordovician period, which ended about 443 million years ago, many of the exhibit's conclusions are wrong.

"But a lot of that is the point," said Rosenthal. "We get things wrong. We interpret what we find as historians or anthropologists."

As one plaque reads: "Little is known of the physiology of the Ordovician body, but the outward appearance was greatly enhanced by drugs which shaped one to look more like those celebrated in Ordovician PORNOGRAPHY. These pills occasionally took the form of patches and other accessories. It is believed that, for a time, these patches took on significance as ultimately ceremonial jewelry."

The e-mails in the exhibit were culled from thousands collected by Harrold Tuttledge of the Center for Anthropological Computing, a small Boston-based organization that pleads to anachronism itself because it lacks a Web site.

The artists indeed found poetry in the strings of nonsense that spammers include in messages to evade anti-spam software. Here's one near-haiku:

Subject: (SPAM?) read this-i have a new cream for stretch marks

"a new you / communicating with server / fast shipping / bergen salvar/

unaligned nicht ausgerichtet, krum(Adverb) "

Like all good curators, the artists also employ dioramas. In some, dangling photos represent the Third World scammers who profess to need us so urgently.

You can then pick up a phone to hear a grainy voice plead with you personally as a "God fearing person" to help keep a recently found sum of $25 million from being repossessed by the Nigerian government.

"There are a million different letters like this and they're all perfectly ridiculous, but what's interesting is that the people are all real political figures from African history," Rosenthal said.

Installations in the show pay homage both to the solicitors and the unwilling receivers of spam.

A wall of testimonials to the effectiveness of spam ("MASS EMAIL WORKS") faces a wall of confused and frustrated recipients, including one from 1982 in which the writer doesn't seem to know what do with this new phenomenon, much less what to call it.

"There was an early age of this stuff, when people were really getting these e-mails for the first time," said Rosenthal. "There's this losing of digital innocence. Once everyone is cynical about this, once there are no more grandmothers who are going to believe all the things that they are getting in their inboxes, what happens then?"

Maybe that's when spam truly becomes history.

"Reimagining the Ordovician Gothic" is showing its half-truths at Spaceworks Gallery in Manhattan through Feb. 7.

On the Net:

http://www.thetanknyc.com/spaceworks

Apple Launches iBook Repair Program

Apple Computer has started a program to repair or replace certain defective iBook notebook computers. The company has been threatened with class-action lawsuits pertaining to the faulty machines.

Apple's support initiative is called the "iBook Logic Board Repair Extension Program." Essentially, it is a narrow, retroactive three-year warranty that begins on the date of purchase for iBook models manufactured between May of 2002 thru April of 2003.

There were rumblings earlier this month from many iBook users who complained of breakdowns attributed to a failure in the logic board. At the time, Apple indicated the complaints were not significant.

"We don't have any statistics about the failure rate, but if Apple is instituting a repair program like this, you have to think it's more than a handful of people," said Ric Ford, president of MacIntouch.com, an independent Mac user site. "Clearly, there's a problem with iBooks that other Macs don't have," he added.

"I think this is great that Apple has acknowledged the problem and is

fixing it - it’s really the ideal response," Ford told NewsFactor.

But the company does not spell out the specific nature of the problems covered by the program. Apple says that only its technical-support representatives or an authorized company service provider can determine whether a component failure falls under the iBook Logic Board Repair Extension Program.

"I think it’s interesting how vague Apple’s description of the problem is," noted Ford. "They don’t say what components have failed."

Perhaps a larger issue with discontented Mac users is the perception that Apple has abandoned them. Michael Johnson’s Blackcider.com site is collecting signatures in hopes of mounting a class-action suit against Apple. Brendan Carolan started another petition at Petitiononline.com urging Apple to repair or replace defective machines.

But some of the disaffection among users can be traced to the high - in some cases, ultra-high - expectations of Apple. Many believe the company runs circles around Microsoft (and Intel like a high-tech Till Eulenspiegel. Being treated like a regular ol’ customer when a machine breaks down does not fit the we-are-family group hug experience of Macworld.

Certainly, some Mac lovers will feel betrayed over Apple’s right to deem whose fault the vaguely described logic board failures are. Still, many Mac lovers will not stay mad forever.

Ric Ford just takes it in stride. "I bought two of these defective machines myself, so I kind of voted with my wallet," he acknowledged. "Now I’m careful not to work the case or handle it too heavily in the corners."

Google Gets Sued

A distributor of window blinds and wallpaper has filed a lawsuit against Google, saying the search engine’s keyword-based advertising violates its trademarks.

American Blind and Wallpaper Factory, based in Plymouth, Michigan, filed the trademark lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York Tuesday. Codefendants in the lawsuit include Netscape Communications and Ask Jeeves, sites that use Google’s search engine.

American Blind argues that Google, by selling keyword-based advertising to competing retailers when Google users search on "American Blind" or "American Blinds" is violating the company’s trademark. American Blind had threatened to file the lawsuit last year. That prompted Google, in a filing with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California November 26, to argue that "American" and "Blind" and other words American Blind was claiming as trademarks are descriptive and shouldn’t enjoy trademark protection.

The two companies had been sparring over the trademark dispute for about a year.

American Blind is asking the New York court for an injunction requiring Google to stop keyword-based advertising on its trademarks. The retailer

is also seeking damages that are yet to be determined, said David Rammelt, American Blind’s lawyer.

"Every time they’ve diverted a potential customer to one of our competitors, we’ve been harmed," Rammelt said. "American Blind has spent more that 50 years and $70 million building its reputation."

American Blind has asked the California judge to throw out the request from Google that its keyword-based advertising model be ruled legal. A hearing is scheduled March 29. A Google spokesperson declined to comment on the new lawsuit, saying the company was waiting for the outcome of the March hearing. "We’ve only just seen the complaint," she said.

Other companies, such as General Motors and National Car Rental System use generic words in their names and could be targeted for keyword-based advertising, Rammelt said. The American Blind lawsuit could have huge implications for keyword-based advertising and trademarks on the Internet, he added.

"Google has decided what trademarks it will honor and what trademarks it will not," Rammelt said. "You have decades and decades of trademark law, and it’s trying to grapple with new technology."

American Blind has no problem with Google selling advertising to competitors when a user searches on the word "blinds," Rammelt said. But someone searching for "American Blinds" is looking for his client, he argued.

Earlier this month, Netscape settled a similar lawsuit brought by Playboy Enterprises. In the 5-year-old lawsuit, Playboy sued Netscape for using its trademarks to deliver search engine advertisements. Terms of the settlement were not disclosed.

’CtrlAltDelete’ Inventor Restarts Career

David Bradley spent five minutes writing the computer code that has bailed out the world’s PC users for decades.

The result was one of the most well-known key combinations around: CtrlAltDelete. It forces obstinate computers to restart when they will no longer follow other commands.

Bradley, 55, is getting a new start of his own. He’s retiring Friday after 28 1/2 years with IBM.

Bradley joined the company in June 1975 as an engineer in Boca Raton, Fla. By 1980, he was one of 12 working to create the IBM PC. He now works at IBM’s facility in Research Triangle Park.

The engineers knew they had to design a simple way to restart the computer should it fail. Bradley wrote the code to make it work.

"I didn’t know it was going to be a cultural icon," Bradley said. "I did a lot of other things than CtrlAltDelete, but I’m famous for that one."

His fame depends on others failures.

At a 20-year celebration for the IBM PC, Bradley was on a panel with Microsoft founder Bill Gates and other tech icons. The discussion turned to the keys.

"I may have invented it, but Bill made it famous," Bradley said.

Gates didn't laugh. The key combination also is used when software, such as Microsoft's Windows operating system, fails.

Bradley, whose name was once mentioned as a clue in the final round of the TV game show "Jeopardy," will continue teaching at N.C. State University after retirement.

His office is filled with memories of his time at IBM and the keys that brought him fame in the tech world. He says he has almost every cartoon that featured CtrlAltDelete. There are video clips of the "Jeopardy" show and the panel with Gates.

"After having been the answer on final 'Jeopardy,' if I can be a clue in 'The New York Times' Sunday crossword puzzle, I will have met all my life's goals," Bradley said.

Telemarketers Must Transmit Caller-ID Data

Telemarketers will be required to transmit their telephone numbers and other caller-ID information under new rules that take effect on Thursday.

The new regulation should make it easier for consumers with caller-ID equipment to screen out unwanted telephone sales calls and report those who are ignoring requests to be left alone, the Federal Trade Commission said.

Along with their telephone numbers, telemarketers will be required to transmit their names to caller-ID readers where technically possible, the FTC said.

Some telephone companies are not yet equipped to handle caller names.

Telemarketers may alternatively transmit the names and phone numbers of the companies for which they are selling products, the FTC said.

The new rule should make it easier for consumers to call telemarketers back and ask to be left alone, according to the Direct Marketing Association, a trade group.

The FTC tightened telemarketing regulations last year, creating the tremendously popular Do Not Call registry, which forbids telemarketers from calling households that do not want to hear from them.

Americans have placed more than 50 million phone numbers on the no-call list, which has been challenged in court by the Direct Marketing Association and several telemarketing firms.

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